A CHAPLAIN'S-EYE VIEW OF COUNSELING

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PURPOSE

During the seven years I have served as a chaplain in the U. S. Army, a continuously large number of persons has sought me out and shared their problems. Regardless of the type of unit--artillery, air defense, infantry or a headquarters command--the volume of counseling traffic has been both astounding and sometimes overwhelming. In the capacity of counselor, this chaplain found himself utilized to the limit; however, I also felt isolated and blocked off from men doing the same task. Chaplains do not seem to have a common denominator from which to speak of their counseling. Not only does this difficulty exist between chaplains, it persists to a large extent with commanders, too. Logically, some kind of classification of the kinds and varieties of counseling which chaplains do is desirable.

This paper was begun in the hope of developing a realistic and practical device for chaplains to use in recording the varieties of counseling situations. But after searching in vain for information and evaluations of chaplains' counseling, it became apparent that very little data exists. There are no generally accepted devices to measure the amount or reveal the varieties of counseling a chaplain does. There is some evidence that chaplains could not evaluate the varieties or number of cases of counseling because they do not have records. Attempting to be more realistic, then, this paper begins the larger task with an attempt to discover how chaplains view their counseling role. Such questions as the importance, effectiveness, content, recording and action arising

from the chaplain's counseling are the subject of a survey which is the focus of this research paper.

METHOD

Chaplains of the 1973 C-22 class were selected to complete the survey. Eighty-two chaplains were asked to complete the survey and 59 surveys were returned. Four were received after the data had been evaluated and were not included. One was incomplete to the point of being invalid. Fifty-four surveys were used in collating the data.

These chaplains have had five to eight years of experience as pastoral chaplains, and have not been removed from this work by longstanding administrative positions. They have completed college and seminary or an equivalent and some hold master's degrees. At least five have completed one year of specialized counseling training. All of those replying are qualified, according to the Army Chaplains Corps, to become career chaplains. They are proven professionals.

The survey consisted of two parts. The first part has 38 short questions with multiple-choice answers. They are impression-type questions, most of which have possible answers of never, seldom, occasionally or frequently. A few are Yes-No answers, a few ask for a quantity answer, such as 0-20%, 20-40%. The object was not so much to get numerical data as to discover what the chaplains thought and how they felt about counseling. Part II, which has not been used in the development of this paper, asked the chaplains to make a judgment of a proposed list of varieties of

counseling, to estimate how many cases of any given variety they encountered and how much time this counseling used.

RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

A copy of the survey used will be found in the appendix. The numbers in parenthesis at the end of each section of this part of the paper refer to question numbers in the survey.

Importance of the Counseling Role

The initial question on the survey was direct. "On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being relatively unimportant and 5 being extremely important) rank the role of counseling in your total ministry." Over 75% ranked counseling at 4 or 5. Only three chaplains ranked counseling at two and none ranked it in the lowest category. The overwhelming majority ranked their counseling role as a very important part of their total ministry.

When the amount of time spent is considered, 74% of the chaplains felt more than 40% of their time was used in counseling. This is equivalent to two full days of the five day working week. Also, 23% felt they spent over 60% of their time counseling. As a minimum, 94% estimated one day a week was so used. None of the chaplains considered himself exclusively a counselor but nearly all indicated a substantial part to a majority of their time is utilized in counseling. That counseling takes so large a portion of the chaplain's time is another indication that it is an important aspect of his ministry.

Not only does the chaplain make a large investment in counseling hours, but 76% of the chaplains polled felt people could utilize

more time in counseling! Chaplains feel their counseling is in demand. When asked if it is "easy to be available" for this counseling, roughly half of the chaplains indicated it is not.

When speaking of counseling, these chaplains include office sessions, crisis situations and counseling situations outside the office. Seventy-two percent of the chaplains estimated 20% or more of their counseling was done apart from the office. Counseling occurs in many situations within the chaplain's activities.

How does the chaplain think the commander views the chaplain's counseling role? If the commander thinks counseling is an important function of the chaplain, the chaplain will be influenced by that view. In a question as to the importance commanders attach to the counseling task, 78% said commanders gave the impression they considered counseling to be a primary part of the chaplain's job, 22% said commanders thought it of secondary importance. But none believed commanders thought counseling to be of little or no importance.

Trying to judge what someone else thinks may be a doubtful exercise, but it is easier to judge what he does. Commanders do refer persons to the chaplain for counseling. Sixty-one percent of the chaplains said that commanders did so frequently, another 35% said they did so occasionally, only 4% said seldom, none found that commanders never referred people. Forty-one percent of the chaplains reported that commanders frequently expressed appreciation for their counseling efforts, 48% said they did so

occasionally, 11% said commanders seldom or never expressed appreciation.

However over half the chaplains said commanders seldom (25%) or never (27%) considered counseling in the writing of Officer Efficiency Reports (OERs), 17% said counseling was considered occasionally, 31% said frequently.. Also about half said counseling was seldom or never of primary concern to their raters, althought 34% said it was occasionally and 14% said frequently. Finally, 80% of the chaplains reported that they had not received a military award based upon their counseling, while 20% said they had.

To find out what commanders really think, we would of course have to ask commanders. But it is apparent that these chaplains believe 1) the commanders do attach great importance to the counseling task, 2) they do refer problems to the chaplain, 3) they do appreciate the chaplain's counseling role, 4) but they do not, to the same extent at least, consider counseling when writing OERs or recommending awards.

Two questions were aimed at finding out how chaplains evaluate the results of their own counseling. Not surprisingly, all chaplains felt their counseling to have some effect. When asked, "Are you an agent of change?" no one answered never, 4% said seldom, while 78% said occasionally and 18% said frequently. Most chaplains felt they were of significant help to persons. Thirty-eight percent felt they helped at least 60% of the time (or three persons out of every five), 70% believed they helped at least

40% of the time, 98% believed their help was significant 20% of the time or more. Most of the chaplains avoided expressing extreme optimism or pessism about the degree of help they offer, but most chose the upper end of the middle range. Briefly, most do believe their counseling is significantly helpful.

How important is counseling? In determining the importance of counseling the chaplains were initially asked how important it is, the amount of time expended on counseling was considered, as was the demand for counseling, the interrelatedness of counseling and other chaplain functions, the chaplain's estimation of how important commanders regard counseling and his effectiveness in helping persons. In every area the vast majority of these chaplains answered in such a way as to indicate that they feel their counseling role is extremely important. (1-4, 6, 9-12, 14, 18, 23, 24)

Representativeness

Overwhelmingly, the chaplains believe that the problems brought to counseling represent the range of problems people encounter in military life. Ninety-eight percent of them concurred in this assessment. When asked whom their counselees represented, 7% of the chaplains answered "a small segment of the community," 56% answered "a broad cross section" and 37% felt they could not determine. While agreeing that the counselees' problems represent problems in military life, a large segment could not determine whether the counselees themselves were or were not representative of the whole military community. (19, 22)

Number of sessions

How many sessions, on the average, does the chaplain have with each counselee? The following table shows their responses.

No. of sessions	No. of chaplains responding	% of chaplains
1-2	19	35.8
3-5	30	56.6
6-10	4	7.6
10+	0	0

They were then asked what determined the number of sessions. Fifteen percent said the number of sessions was primarily determined by the counselor's concept of the need for counseling, 44% said it was the counselee's concept of the need for counseling, and 19% indicated it was due to the availability of the counselee. The remaining 22% listed either a combination of these reasons or stated one of the following: expectations of the client, the situation, the nature of the contract between counselor and client, or the commander's concept of counseling. Although offered as a choice, none of the chaplains indicated the number of sessions was related to the availability of the counselor.

Apparently most chaplains average from one to five sessions per counselee. This may be sufficient for many. A significant number of chaplains are saying that it is in fact possible to conclude many counseling situations in five sessions or less. (7, 8)

Consultation

With whom does a chaplain talk about counseling cases and under what circumstances?

A great majority of the chaplains had had a consulting therapist (a social worker, clinical psychologist or psychiatrist) available; 50% had found such a consultant available frequently, 31% occasionally, 15% seldom, 4% never. When professional confidentiality has been invoked, some chaplains feel constrained from such consultation. Thirty-five percent said they have never felt free to utilize such a consultant in this circumstance, 28% more would seldom do so, 35% would feel free occasionally, only 2% frequently.

Asked whether they would consult with other chaplains concerning issues raised under privileged communications, more than half, 54% said yes, 46% said no. Significant differences were not found between Catholic and Protestant chaplains in this regard. Catholic respondents were almost evenly divided, as was the whole group.

Every chaplain has on some occasion checked his perception of community trends (as revealed in counseling) with other chaplains. Twenty-two percent had done so seldom, 50% occasionally, 28% frequently.

Most chaplains do consult with other chaplains and other therapists about issues and trends raised in counseling sessions. A substantial number, but not a majority, are constrained from such consultations by professional confidence, while a considerable number, apparently more than half, do not feel that consultation need be a breach of confidence.

Counselees may release the chaplain from privileged communication and request his active participation in their situations.

Eight percent said this had never happened to them, 28% said it seldom happened, 55% that it occurred occasionally and 9% said frequently. (21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32)

Information Gathering Through Counseling

All the chaplains indicated they had been made aware of administrative difficulties in areas such as finance and personnel by counselees. Two-thirds of the chaplains are frequently made aware of such problems. Further, information about the counselees and the community (additional to the specific problem) is received at the same rate; one third occasionally receive extra information and two-thirds frequently do so.

Information from counseling revealed community trends which might otherwise have escaped the chaplain's attention according to 100% of the chaplains. Eleven percent seldom receive this information, 67% occasionally do and 22% frequently do.

Sources adversely affecting morale--such as an individual, an office, a regulation or a community structure--have been identified through counseling in every chaplain's experience. Six percent of the chaplains have seldom identified these sources, 59% occasionally, and 35% frequently.

All the responding chaplains have received significant information pertaining to the military community through counselees. Administrative difficulties within the community are frequently brought to the attention of most chaplains. Information beyond the counselee's concern(s), pertaining to himself and the community is received and community trends are brought to the chaplain's

attention. Ninety-four percent of the chaplains occasionally or frequently identify sources adversely affecting morale through information received in counseling. (26, 27, 31, 34)

Chaplain Activity Resulting from Counseling

Chaplains receive a great deal of information which, if utilized, might have a significant effect on the community. The chaplain faces the task of finding places and ways to use this information.

As previously mentioned, a number of the chaplains had been occasionally or frequently requested to get involved in the counselee's situation beyond the counseling.

On the basis of having been asked or of having acquired knowledge of situations indicating adverse community trends or sources of difficulty, 82% of the chaplains have acted to expose them to responsible leaders and 83% have themselves attempted to address these problems occasionally or frequently. (28, 33, 35)

Recording

Thirteen percent of the chaplains polled said they never have kept a record of the number or variety of their counseling cases, but the great majority have kept some kind of record, 15% seldom, 21% occasionally, 51% frequently. When asked if they had found or devised an adequate counseling log 58.5% said yes, 41.5% said no. Those who had answered yes were then asked if it had been helpful in making a systematic review of counseling and of these 87% said yes and 13% said no. Finally, all were asked if they would consider

a more comprehensive log and 63% answered yes.

Most chaplains keep some kind of records of their counseling cases but a significant number, 28%, do so seldom or never. While almost 60% describe their counseling log as adequate, slightly more than 60% would consider a log more comprehensive than whatever they are now using.

Again, no difference was found among Protestants and Catholics as to whether they would or would not consider a more comprehensive log.

Those who indicated they had used an adequate log were invited to attach a sample but no one did so. Two chaplains noted that they had a "file of index cards," another said such records were in storage. (20, 36, 37, 38)

DISCUSSION

In the survey chaplains said they acquired significant information of adverse community trends and of sources of hurt through counseling. In addition, counselees ask chaplains to operate in the community in their behalf. Did the chaplains get involved outside the counseling setting? More than 80% did! Their counseling led them into community involvement and a ministry in the community.

Since counseling often takes a chaplain into the drama of human relations, it would seem to be very important to fully understand what chaplains are already doing and to analyze it more thoroughly. This study points toward the need for more work in this area. To some, it may be surprising to find counselors who move from the confines of the office into the interpersonal conflicts

(some involving regulations, procedures and authority) all in the name of ministry.

Chaplain's View of the Counseling Role

Chaplains give counseling a high priority in their work. The survey indicates these chaplains spend from a substantial to a major portion of their working time in counseling. To many, it may be more important than any other single aspect of their work. If the commanders attach the same importance to counseling as the chaplains think they do, why do the commanders not express this concern more vigorously in the writing of OERs and award recommendations? Also, does the Chaplain Corps leadership really understand how much chaplains are making of this role?

How Limited is the Chaplain's Time?

Compared to other therapists, chaplains have few counseling sessions with each client and half the chaplains stated it was difficult to be available for the counseling. Three quarters of the chaplains think more people would seek counseling if the chaplain were available. In spite of these time factors none of the chaplains felt the number of counseling sessions were limited by the counselor's availability. This appears to be an inconsistency.

While 1-5 sessions may be adequate for a significant portion of the counselees, the number of sessions may be limited for other reasons, including the chaplain's sense of the pressure of time.

When the evidence is weighed, it is difficult to imagine that the chaplain's availability is not an important reason for the relatively small number of counseling sessions. Further inquiry and evaluation might clarify this aspect of the chaplain-counselee contract.

Conflict of Conscience Over Consultations

Privileged communication, that material shared with the chaplain in confidence, may be causing a problem in consulting with therapists or other chaplains. Nearly every counseling case could be construed as a privileged communication. Does this cause the chaplain to be isolated from the help and experience of others in dealing with most of his counseling? If so, it could mean that nearly half of the chaplains are on their own in counseling. Furthermore, denominational positions on this matter --if there are such--are apparently unclear to the chaplains. This topic needs clarification. Otherwise, some counselees are denied the expertise of consultants while other counselees' right to privileged communication may be construed as violated.

The Matter of Records

Among the chaplains completing the survey, more than a quarter seldom or never keep records of their counseling cases. The records kept by the others may or may not be helpful for purposes of evaluation.

Part II of the survey, requesting information on the varieties of counseling cases, the time used and the number of cases, has

not been used in the preparation of the paper because there were too few answers. There may have been some problems with the construction of this portion of the survey. It did not take into account the differences in unit assignments in which the chaplains might have experienced real differences in the counseling load, but then neither did Part I and this did not prevent the chaplains from answering those questions. These chaplains, being in school,are currently away from their counseling task, so immediate data is not available to them. However, the answers requested were not specific but approximations within categories, such as 0-20%, 20-40%, and 1-5, 5-10 cases, etc. Again, such questions were answered readily in Part I. That the chaplains could not estimate these answers suggests that in the past their records have not been adequate for regular evaluation, or else that chaplains have not felt it important to look at the records for purposes of review or evaluation. Sixty percent of these chaplains did say they were interested in a more comprehensive log, and nearly half already believe their current record-keeping is inadequate.

Like men busy chopping down trees, many chaplains are so close to cases they have little concept of the shape of the counseling task as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The parameters of the counseling task may be much broader than some would suppose. It appears that for a sizeable number of chaplains, counseling may be the single most time-consuming

element of their ministry. This is probably not because they spend a great deal of time with a few "problem" soldiers, but because they see a great many counselees with a wide variety of problems. Moreover, many chaplains do not merely hear these problems, but they address themselves boldly to persons, agencies and regulations which appear to need change. However, until chaplains do keep records and evaluate their counseling as a whole, much remains unclear and research is limited.

Important questions raised through this paper far outnumber the answers which were found. Among these are: Is consulting in counseling cases bogged down by diverging interpretations of privileged communication? Do chaplains see most clients less than five times because of the pressure of time or the nature of the problems which clients bring to them? How does the commander view the counseling role? Would counseling records with continuous evaluation help the chaplain's perception of community trends and his effort to identify sources of hurt? Does the leadership of the Chaplains Corps recognize and concur with the importance chaplains assign to counseling? Because of the counseling role, should the ratio of chaplains to military personnel be reviewed?

Because of the effort expended by the chaplain in counseling, and for the sake of the hurting community members, it would appear that some type of counseling log device should be prepared and used in a controlled experiment. I believe a grasp of the whole counseling task would be of value in ministering to both individuals and community; I believe it would be a giant step toward professional maturity.

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